

Rouss City Hall
15 North Cameron Street
Winchester, VA 22601

Telephone: (540) 667-1815
FAX: (540) 723-0238
TDD: (540) 722-0782
Website: www.winchesterva.gov

General Reassessment Information

The City of Winchester performs biennial reassessments and equalization of all real property located within the City to determine the full and fair market value as of January 1 of each odd-numbered year. This is done in accordance with the City Code to distribute taxes equitably among all taxpayers at a real estate tax rate set by City Council. The formula to calculate your taxes is as follows:

$$(\text{Property Assessment}/100) \times (\text{Tax Rate}) = \text{Annual Taxes}$$

Example: Tax Rate -- \$0.86 per \$100
Property Assessment -- \$100,000
 $(\$100,000/100) \times 0.86 = \860.00 Annual Taxes

Reassessment Process

The Finance Department is the city department responsible for directing all real property reassessments at 100% of market value every two years. City Council believes that the use of an independent contractor is the most effective and efficient way to ensure that reassessments are conducted thoroughly and uniformly. The City's Real Estate Administrator will manage and oversee the work of the independent contractor who shall be certified with the Virginia Department of Taxation to perform reassessments.

Notices of Reassessment are mailed during January of each reassessment year. City Council sets the tax rate in April as part of the City budget process and real estate tax bills are mailed in early May.

Market Value

Market value is defined as the amount a typical, well-informed purchaser would be willing to pay for a property. The seller and buyer must be unrelated, the seller must be willing, but not under pressure to sell, and the buyer must be willing, but not under any obligation to buy. The property must be on the market for a reasonable length of time, the payment must be in cash or its equivalent, and the financing must be typical for that type of property. If all of these conditions are present, a market value, arm's-length sale exists.

Reassessment Appeal Process

Any property owner may make inquiries regarding biennial reassessment to the Real Estate Administrator or appeal to the Board of Equalization if the reassessment (a) does not reflect current market value, (b) is not uniform with similar properties, or (c) is based on inaccurate property details. As required, the City's reassessment is an estimate of fair market value as of January 1 of each odd-numbered year, based on sales for the previous calendar year. In order to appeal, please return a completed Real Estate Appeal of Assessment form to the Finance Department, Real Estate Administrator. Appeal forms are available on the City's website or at the Finance Department. Appeal options:

1. Contact the Real Estate Administrator: This is the recommended first step with basic questions or to schedule an in-house review. However, this is not a legal requirement prior to filing an appeal of assessment.
2. Board of Equalization (BOE): The BOE is an independent panel of citizens, appointed by the Circuit Court of the City of Winchester to hear complaints of inequalities wherein the property owners allege a lack of uniformity in assessment, errors in acreage or complaints that real property is assessed at more than its fair market value. The BOE will schedule appeals up until March 15 of the year the new values go into effect. The BOE will address only those appeals with a properly completed appeals form filed by the stated deadline. The BOE will provide the property owner with its decision by mail within thirty (30) days.
3. Circuit Court: At any time, a property owner may appeal a real estate assessment directly to the Circuit Court, in accordance with limits set by Virginia State Code. Upon appeal to the Circuit Court, the burden of proof is solely with the property owner. You will be required to provide evidence to the Court that substantiates your contention that the assessed value of your property is inequitable based on fair market value, the assessed value of comparable properties, or factual discrepancies with the City's records. You will also be required to pay all associated court costs. Once the Circuit Court issues its decision, all parties are obligated to adhere to its findings and the appeal process ends.

Real Estate Tax Relief and Exemptions

The City of Winchester has several programs for real estate tax relief and exemption. Please contact the office of the Commissioner of the Revenue for more information or to determine eligibility and filing requirements for each program. Some of these forms are also available on the City's website:

1. Local real estate tax exemption or deferral for the elderly and disabled
2. Local real estate tax exemption for qualifying disabled veterans
3. Exemptions for substantially rehabilitated residential, commercial and industrial property
4. Exemptions for abated derelict property conditions
5. Property exempt from taxation by designation and classification
6. Exemptions for solar energy equipment, facilities and devices
7. Special land use taxation for qualifying agricultural or horticultural property.